

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 16 January 2023

**Title:** Holy Trinity Churchyard Tree Works

**Contact Officer:** Operations Manager - Angus Whitburn

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### **Background**

Holy Trinity Church has requested that the council reviews the trees in the churchyard for recommended works to help improve the view of the church and alleviate issues caused by squirrels.

In early November an onsite meeting was held with church representatives, District Council officers and Town Council officers. As the area is within the conservation zone the Town Council needs approval from the District to conduct any work.

### **Current Situation**

The council's tree policy only covers works on trees which present a safety issue (to people, buildings and roads) or to improve the health of the tree. The work the church is asking the council to do is outside of this policy. The only exception to that may be the issue caused by squirrels.

Squirrels entering the church are not a problem caused by the trees, they are issues with the security of the church. This was explained to representatives of the church and as the same with any property neighbouring a tree, it is their responsibility to secure any way squirrels may be entering the building.

The District tree officers submitted a list of works to the Town Council they would approve, these works were limited to pruning of tree limbs and removal of epicormic growth. Multiple mature trees were drastically pruned a few years ago and it wouldn't be to the benefit of any trees in the church yard to be pruned any further, nor without their complete removal would it improve the view of the church. Additionally, the District tree officer has said the felling of any trees would need to be supported with technical arboriculture advice that felling was the only solution in repose to identified structural problems.

Witney Town Council officers identified the following works, these works would improve the view of the church and also aid its maintenance of the churchyard. So, in completing these works the council are not needlessly removing tree or tree limbs but managing a future issue with the added benefit of improving the view of the church.

- Fell & stump grind - T857 – Laburnum, engulfed with ivy and growing very close to the church wall.
- Fell & stump grind - T859 – Taxus – small conifer that is growing into an early 1900's headstone
- Fell & stump grind - T2107 – Taxus - smaller conifer growing just behind and only around 1.2m in height.

These works have been approved by the District tree officer, should the council wish to proceed with them.

The annual tree survey for 2022-23 is still due so this may raise further recommendations. The standard process is to complete all works outlined in the inspections, however, it may identify no recommended works.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

The Council should be making all efforts to maintain its tree stock, especially when it comes to mature trees. The church has made an offer to plant new trees for any felled but it was raised that the replacement of young saplings for mature trees isn't a solution.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Any work in the churchyard with the sole aim of increasing the view of the church would be against the council's adopted tree policy and may start a precedent.

### **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- There is sufficient funds in the tree maintenance budget to cover the suggested works.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Complete the works outlined in this report by Town Council Officers and continue with the standard process of completing any works identified in the annual tree report due early 2023.